

## Atmosphere by Lyzzygyrl

**Category:** Stranger Things (TV 2016)

**Genre:** M/M

**Language:** English

**Characters:** Dustin Henderson, Eleven | Jane Hopper, Johnathan Byers, Joyce Byers, Karen Wheeler, Lucas Sinclair, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Michael Wheeler, Nancy Wheeler, Ted Wheeler, Will Byers

**Relationships:** Will Byers & Mike Wheeler, Will Byers/Mike Wheeler

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**Summary:**

So pretty much, Mike is clueless but it's okay because Will is patient.

# 1. Back and Better

## Author's Note:

Hey guys! this is my first fanfic and I know it's kind of short, but I promise I am going somewhere with this...Anyway, I hope you like it! Comments are super appreciated!

Mike awoke with renewed energy. Usually he was the type to lay in bed as long as possible and weigh the likelihood of his mom believing he is too sick to go to school. This morning, however, Mike jumps out of bed almost the second his alarm clock goes off. He grabs his towel from the hook on the back of his door and runs to the bathroom. He quickly washes himself up and goes back to his room to get dressed. He tries on outfit after outfit, discarding the rejects to pile at the end of his bed. He finally settles on a light blue and white striped polo and his new jeans; the expensive ones that he begged his mom to buy him because they fit his frame just right. He'd been wary of wearing them at all for fear that he would spill something on them or accidentally rip them.

It irritated his mother to no end, but Mike had held up his end of the bargain and completed the long list of chores his mother gave him in exchange for the purchase, so she let it go. He still put them on ever so carefully and placed a napkin on his lap while he ate breakfast for good measure. He'd been saving them for a special occasion and he figured being reunited with his best friend after nearly two months apart was about as special as an occasion could get.

Will would be returning today from an art camp in Florida. He'd been offered a full scholarship to the camp's summer program for aspiring young artists. Mike had been so proud when Will ran up to him that Friday morning with a paper in his hand and a huge smile on his face. Will deserved this; he deserved the very best. After his return from the upside down and his release from the mind flayers control, Will had thrown himself into his artwork. He would spend hours and hours drawing and painting and practicing new techniques until his hands would cramp and his eyes were too heavy to continue.

Joyce had been worried that Will seemed to be disappearing into his own imagination. But she soon realized that Will was using his

artwork as a therapy to work through nightmares and memories surrounding his awful experiences. He slowly but surely started hanging out with his friends again and participating in family nights; which mostly consisted of arguing about which movie to watch and sharing a bowl of burnt popcorn. He rejoined the world of living as Mike liked to call it, but he was never far from a sketch pad and pencil and stopped to draw whenever inspiration struck. This compulsion paid off evidently because after displaying his work at a county fair on his teacher's recommendation, he was discovered and offered a spot at this prestigious camp.

A smile spread across Mike's face at the memory of Will's success and the excitement of knowing he would see his friend in less than an hour. Mike stood in front of the mirror attempting to tame his head of wild black curls. He brushed them to one side and then the other. He let out a frustrated huff as the waves fell back to their original position. He always hated his hair; so uncontrollable. Not like Will's hair...his silky straight auburn fringe that framed his beautiful face... beautiful face? Mike brushed the thought away quickly and decided to ignore the slight swoop in his stomach. He left the bathroom ignoring the question of just why he cared so much what Will would think of how he looked. He was his best friend...its natural to want to make a good impression on your best friend, especially when you've been apart for two unbearable months.

Mike gave up on his hair and threw on his chucks before running out the front door to his bike. He peddled perhaps a bit too quickly in all his excitement as he had a sheen of sweat on his forehead by the time he'd arrived at school. It was the first day of Freshmen year and despite it being the fall term, it was still very much the summer weather. After locking his bike to the rack, he took notice of his surroundings for the first time. He was surprised to see only a few people; mainly teachers, meandering about. He looked at his watch and realized he was nearly a half hour early to school. Becoming aware of his sweaty forehead and heavy breaths from his strenuous bike ride, he decided it would be good to have the time to cool down and compose himself before seeing Will.

He grabbed his backpack and made his way over to one of the benches by the front entrance. He chose the one in the center; close enough to the street to have only short distance between him and an arriving Will, but still close enough to the building to provide him shade. He sat twiddling his thumbs and bouncing right leg. Finally,

he had to stand and pace the length of the bench. As much as he wanted to cool himself down, he just couldn't seem to contain his nervous energy.

Another fifteen minutes or so passed before other students began to arrive. It was easy to pick out the upperclassmen from his fellow-freshmen; the freshmen were rushing about trying to find the correct building for their first class and attempt to get a lay of the land, while all other students took slow, almost lethargic steps in their unwillingness to accept that summer is over. Mike had become so distracted in his people watching that he didn't notice the two figures that had taken a seat beside him. His head shot up in surprise to see Dustin and Lucas at either side. Dustin placed his head on Mike's shoulder with a yawn while muttering something about waking up this early being child abuse. Lucas rolled his eyes in unison with Mike's and reached across his lap to gently pat Dustin's leg. "You poor tired man you...faking the flu didn't work huh?"

Dustin slowly opened his eyes and shook his head in a disappointed manner. Mike couldn't help but laugh at his friend. They sat in silence for maybe a minute before Lucas chimed in with the best news Mike had ever heard. "Hey, isn't that Johnathon's car?" Mike shot up from his sitting position, nearly knocking Dustin off of the bench in the process. Lucas was right, he'd recognize Johnathon's beat up old car anywhere. He watched in fascination as the car approached; the fuzzy outline of two people in the front seat becoming clearer. Finally, Johnathon pulled into a parking spot and quickly climbed out. The passenger door remained closed for another couple of seconds before finally creaking open.

Mike's mouth went dry and his heart leapt up into his throat. He didn't see his best friend pulling himself to his feet and slinging his backpack over his shoulder. He didn't know who this boy was, but he couldn't take his eyes off of him. The once simple bowl cut was a thing of the past with the sides being cut shorter while the top was still long and swooped to the side creating an attractive frame to an even more attractive face. It had only been a couple months but will looked like he'd aged a couple of years. His features were sharper; more masculine and any baby fat had melted away and been replaced with toned muscles and tanned skin. He seemed taller, but maybe that was just the way he was carrying himself. No longer did his shoulders slump and his head fall. Instead, he walked tall; his shoulders back, head up, hazel eyes shining.

He was wearing an old clash t-shirt that was tighter on him than the last time Mike had seen it. It hugged his toned chest and showed off his upper arms. His jeans were equally as tight; clinging and falling from his hips and legs in all of the right places. Mike was so entranced by the boy, or more accurately the man, walking towards him that he hardly noticed when he was only a few feet away. "Will! Welcome home!" Lucas walked up to Will and gave him a quick hug. Dustin opted for a different greeting and nearly tackled Will in a huge hug before picking him up and swinging him around.

"Hey man, how was camp? Did you learn a lot? Are you ready for freshman year? You look awesome! Man, we missed you! You..." Dustin's rambling was cut off by a pat on shoulder from Lucas and a small laugh from Will.

"Dude, let him breath."

"It's okay." Will's voice sounded different too. It sounded lighter and more relaxed than Mike could ever remember it sounding before.

"Camp was good, I learned a ton, I think I'm ready for the year, you look awesome too, and I missed you guys more...I think that covers everything." Will laughed at his own response while smiling fondly at his crazy friend. He turned to Mike expectantly and a smile spread across his face. It was sweet but laced with something else. Mike couldn't exactly determine what the something else was, but it made him nervous. Will's smile started to fade, and Mike realized he was still staring open-mouthed at his best friend. He cleared his throat and attempted to form words.

"Will! Hey...uh, welcome home man." Will looked at him skeptically for a moment and then shrugged his shoulders with a laugh.

"Thanks Mike." Mike wanted to keep staring at Will. He wanted to pause time and take in all the changes in his friend. He wasn't ready for the bell to ring and snap everyone out of the reunion.

"Well, this is it." Dustin said as he picked up his bag and stretched his arms as if he just climbed out of bed.

"Freshmen year..." Lucas said a little awestruck. "Let's do this!" The two started walking toward the building seemingly unaware that they were leaving Mike and Will behind. Mike just watched the flurry of activity around himself until he felt eyes on him. He looked to the side and found Will smiling fondly at him. It isn't the first time he's seen that look on Will's face, but it is the first time Will hasn't quickly looked away while attempting to hide the flush in his cheeks. Nope, this time Will kept his gaze fixed on Mike unabashedly. He smiled

softly and reached for Mike's hand. Mike could feel his own face turning a bright shade of red at the physical contact. His heart was racing, and he instinctually wanted to look around to see if anyone was watching them. But he couldn't bring himself to look away from Will's beautiful face...again with the beautiful face...

"I really missed you Mike." Will gave Mike's hand a squeeze before letting go and readjusting his bag on his shoulder. He sighed and looked straight ahead as if he were mentally preparing himself for something. After a moment he looked at Mike with a bright smile. "Like Lucas said...Let's do this!" Will started walking toward the entrance without looking back. Mike watched him for a moment in awe as though he couldn't believe what had just happened. His eyes drifted south, and he realized that Will's jeans looked even tighter from behind. He couldn't help admiring the way the fabric clung to Will just so while his weight shifted from side to side as he walked. He was snapped out of his trance when Will suddenly turned and gave him a suspecting look. It faded as quickly as it appeared, but Mike still felt heat rise in his cheeks at being caught. "You gonna stand there all day, or..." Will laughed as Mike quickly shook off his embarrassment and jogged to join his friend.

## 2. Underestimated

### Notes for the Chapter:

Sorry it took so long for an update, but I hope you guys like the second chapter!

This lecture was really boring; Mike missed Mr. Clark. His lectures never failed to enthrall Mike, making the rest of the students disappear. Unfortunately, Mr. Andrews lecture was doing nothing to distract Mike from the boy to his left. He was completely oblivious to whatever the teacher was babbling on about when the morning sun was hitting Will's features just right, making his usually green eyes turn a mesmerizing yellow with flakes of gold strewn throughout. He tried to focus on his notes, or the black board, or hell he'd settle for focusing on the obnoxious zit that had arrived on his chin just in time for the first day of school. But nope, no matter how hard he tried his eyes always found their way back to Will; like a beacon. He couldn't help but take a quick look to make sure he wasn't just imagining the way Will's eye lashes cast long shadows over his sharp features. Will caught Mike staring more than once and each time offered him an innocent smile in return for a tomato red Mike.

Mike was surprised that Will hadn't questioned all of his staring. After all, he'd spent more of the period watching the gentle rise and fall of Will's chest than he had listening to the teacher explain...well Mike had no idea what he'd been explaining which really says it all. Will just smiled each time he'd turn to meet Mike's gaze. A couple times he'd laughed a little and shook his head in a knowing way. This made Mike's stomach turn. Did Will know what he was thinking? Did he recognize Mike's gaze as the same one that was usually designated for Jennifer Hayes? Will was driving Mike crazy and it was confusing to no end. Mike always knew that Will drew his attention in a way no one else ever had. Over the years Mike had justified his thoughts about Will by comparing him to the girls in their grade. Mike liked girls a lot. He liked their soft pink lips and long shiny hair. He enjoyed watching their gentle features when they laughed and the feeling of their long thin fingers around his neck. Will also had soft lips and shiny hair, his features were as gentle as any of the girls' and his hands had always been the most graceful of everyone in the

party; perhaps that's why he was such a gifted artist.

Mike had used these explanations for years to justify his thoughts and for the most part he'd been able to successfully bury his true feelings. However, Mike was now having a harder time with this process than he usually did. He'd always assumed that once Will finally hit puberty that his feeling will dissipate. That Will would lose his girlish features and Mike would be able to stop admiring him once and for all. Unfortunately, dressing out for gym was proving his theory to be incorrect. Mike had to use every ounce of strength in his arsenal not to openly ogle Will as he changed. Ever since Mike had known Will he had been the flash of dressing out. He would take off his pants and slide on his gym shorts at a record pace, avoiding eye contact with anyone, including his friends. This new Will however, didn't seem to have any problems with confidence.

He slowly took off his shirt stopping midway to make an odd face at the dirty joke Dustin was telling. When his chest was bare he wasted no time wringing his shirt quickly and using it to snap the back of Dustin's legs. Dustin jumped and turned quickly to playfully shove Will. He inadvertently hit Will's very ticklish side. When he realized this, he went full force attacking the smaller boys mid-section. Will was struggling to get out of Dustin's grasp while laughing his ass off. Mike couldn't look away as Will's muscles clenched and released against Dustin's arms. He was golden tan all over; had Will spent the summer shirtless? His frame was still small and his stomach flat, but he had obviously filled out. His shoulders were broader than they were a few months ago and his chest revealed a slight 4-pack. Mike suspected that Will would always be on the smaller side, and frankly that's how he liked it. He liked that Will fit perfectly against him; just tall enough for Mike to rest his chin on the top of Will's head. Will was fighting with all of his strength now, so when Dustin finally let go, Will launched at full speed into an un-expecting Mike. They collapsed to the ground and Will was laughing hard into Mike's neck; his hot breath lingering around Mike's ears. Mike was losing it, having skin to skin contact with Will. He was at a loss of what to do, but he didn't have to wonder for long when he heard a voice coming from a few feet away.

"Well, if it isn't Zombie Boy Byers! Or should I say Faggot Boy Byers?" Troy snickered at his own joke while looking around the locker room to make sure he had a captivated audience to witness the rest of the party's torment. Will sat up and climbed off of Mike. He stood and

brushed off his pants before turning to Troy with an exasperated sigh like he had been expecting this. Troy had always had a petulance for making Will cry, ever since the first grade when he took Will's drawing of a sail boat and told him he was going to see if it was sea-worthy before tossing it into a nearby mud puddle. "I see you finally gave up on girls, Wheeler...good call, it was getting embarrassing." Mike stood up quickly from where he was still sitting on the floor. "Aren't you cute wrestling with your little boyfriend." He knew Troy was going to be a nuisance this year after spending his summer paying his debt to society for joy riding the principles car into a tree. "So, how was fag camp, Byers? You get to suck a lot of dick?" Troy stared Will down smugly at the resounding laughter from the other students. Mike clenched his fists and leaned closer to Will defensively. He was just about to tell Troy to fuck off when he saw Will met Troy's gaze with a bright smile.

"I had an awesome time, thanks for asking Troy." Mike was shocked at just how genuine Will sounded. "How was court mandated community service?" Will continued, mocking Troy's questioning tone. "You get to pick up a lot of trash?" the room exploded into laughter once again, but this time it was directed at Troy. Mike looked at Will in shock before breaking into a hundred-watt smile. He knew Will seemed more confident, but he hadn't expected that. Troy's face was blank as if he needed time to process what he just heard. He expected Will to run or cry like he always used to. After a moment, he went from surprised to enraged. He charged at Will and grabbed him by his bare shoulders before slamming his thin frame against the lockers.

"What did you say to me fairy boy?" Troy spat in a desperate attempt to gain control over the situation. Will seemed completely unaffected as he continued to smile at Troy.

"So, you didn't have a good summer?" Will asked in what was the most innocent voice ever projected. Troy took a step back from Will. He was bright red and he looked almost light-headed. Everyone was laughing and when Troy turned back to Will, he was leaning against the lockers with a smug smile and his hands stuffed leisurely in his pockets. Troy appeared to be short-circuiting. He lunged at Will with a left hook that slammed into the cold metal lockers after Will ducked out of the way jumped to the right.

"Shit!" Troy clutched his fist to his chest and hunched over in pain. The hall was dead-silent while everyone watched in anticipation of a

fight. Troy moaned again, shaking his wrist; grasping desperately for some relief. "I am gonna kill you, byers!" Troy climbed back to his feet, fully prepared to lung at Will again, but he didn't get the chance. Will came at him with full force and despite his small frame, the surprise of his movement gave him the upper hand. He shoved Troy against the lockers and kned him in the groin when he hunched forward. Troy yelped in pain and crumpled to the ground. Will gave Troy a moment to absorb the situation before he leaned down next to him.

"This isn't going to be like Junior High, Troy. You may think you're the shit around this school..." Will kneeled down next to Troy and whispered in his ear "...but I've fought a lot worse than a coward like you..." Will paused for a moment, taking deep breaths to study himself as if he was desperately trying to control himself. "...you have no idea what I can do to you." Will pressed his knee into Troy's already throbbing crotch with just enough pressure to elicit a small whine of pain from Troy. Will carried an expression Mike had never seen before. He looked menacing, like he was prepared to unleash hell. He leaned a little closer trying desperately to hear whatever was making Troy's eyes wide with fear. "You so much as look at me or my friends again and this faggot will fuck you, Troy...and not in the way your closeted ass wants."

With that, Will stood up and proceeded to take off his pants and change into his gym shorts nonchalantly as though nothing happened. He seemed completely unbothered by the thirty or so eyes boring into him. Perhaps he could sense Mike's utter lack of comprehension because took a moment to pat him on the shoulder offering him a reassuring smile before closing his locker and walking out of the room. Everyone was staring with disbelief at Troy who was still holding himself in the fetal position. The room was eerily silent until the sharp sound of a whistle followed by some shouting from Coach Graham drew everyone back into reality. Mike was unable to move at all...What the fuck just happened?

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

So I know it was short, but life is a little crazy right now. Comments are always so appreciated!

### 3. Intrigue

#### Notes for the Chapter:

I was so inspired by the last chapter that I had to type up my ideas for the next chapter right away! I hope you guys like it!

The rest of gym class was equally as strange. Everyone was throwing looks of disbelief at Will. Some of the students tried to be subtle with their gawking while others openly stared; mouths agape, whispering gossip in each other's ears. Troy was keeping a safe distance from Will, trying his best to laugh the event off, "I was acting guys..." Troy laughed nervously "...Zombie Boy needed a win, don't want him to off himself like Benny the burger guy did." Not even Troy was buying his fake compassion act. Will seemed completely unbothered by his newfound infamously. He went through the motions of gym class same as he always had; given, with a touch more coordination than Mike remembered him having. He dribbled the basketball effortlessly running across the court before setting himself up for the shot. The ball sailed into the net with a swoosh. Will didn't take the time to celebrate his win like he would have in the past. He simply jogged toward the ball before collecting it in his nimble grasp and passing it to his teammate, who seemed as taken aback by Will as Mike felt. Mike had never seen Will excel at athletics in any manner. Had he really changed this much over the past two months, or did he only seem more talented because everyone else was scared to cross him after the scene with Troy? Either explanation would have seemed ludicrous this morning. Back in the locker room, Will wasted no time stripping down and grabbing a towel before heading to the showers. He strutted through the rows of boys who were still tossing him curious glances. He didn't even bother to cover himself with the towel; just slung it over his shoulder before whistling his way into the shower and flipping on one of the nozzles. Seriously though, who was this dude? Mike had been about to take a shower himself, but he didn't trust himself to be in close proximity with a naked Will and not obviously check him out. The thought of hot water running down Will's tanned chest was already creating a situation Mike didn't want to display to all of his peers. He was frozen against his locker,

attempting to hide the bulge in his gym shorts.

"You coming, Mike?" Lucas asked as he and Dustin grabbed their towels.

"Don't want all the good sprayers to be taken." Dustin added with a slap to Mike's back. Mike's brain was scrambling to find a response that wouldn't seem suspicious. He was coming up empty, and the longer he stood awkwardly facing away from Dustin and Lucas, the more tense the air was becoming. "You okay, man?" Dustin asked leaning a little closer to Mike.

"yes..." Mike managed to croak out. "...I mean, yeah, I uh...I'm good, just gonna skip the shower today. I didn't work up much of a sweat anyway." Dustin and Lucas exchanged a glance before Lucas quickly rounded Mike, so he and Dustin were at either of his sides; essentially boxing him in. He looked Mike up and down assessing the situation. He couldn't help but laughing a little.

"Nothing to be ashamed of, man...we've all been there." He patted Mike on the shoulder and offered him a knowing smile before grabbing Dustin by his forearm and ushering him into the shower leaving Mike to sort out his situation. Mike rested his forehead against the cool metal of his locker. He tried to pretend that it was just the workout of the adrenaline rush, but his mind kept coming back around to Will's bare ass and his cocky smile. God, he hoped Will hadn't noticed the effect he was having on Mike. Pull yourself together, Wheeler.

The rest of the day passed in a blur. Mike had contained his situation by thinking about that time he walked in on his grandmother in the bath. Yeah, that would kill even the most persistent hard-on. At lunch, Dustin and Lucas grilled Will for more details about his summer at camp. Will animatedly told story after story to his audience of two. He seemed completely relaxed, as if his summer away had melted all the stress he'd been carrying around for the last year. As much as Mike was struggling with his new-found obsession with Will, his thoughts were laced with the same love and devotion he had become accustomed to feeling for his best friend. His heart was practically bursting with happiness for Will. He finally seemed to be seeing himself the way Mike always had.

By the time the last bell rang, Mike was completely exhausted; his energy from this morning had completely dissipated and he was physically and mentally ready to collapse. Man, pretending not to be completely enthralled with your best friend was more taxing than

one might think. Will waved goodbye and climbed into Johnathon's car. They drove away, and Mike made quick work of his goodbyes to the rest of the party before setting himself on the trek home. He traded a few quick words with his mother. After several bouts of "It was fine" and a couple reassurances of "No Mom, I'm just tired" he ran up the stairs and into the retreat of his bedroom. He slumped onto his bed and hugged his pillow close to his face. His thoughts were buzzing in an obnoxious key and Mike tried desperately to silence them. He shoved his face farther into the pillow in an attempt to drowned them out, but it was hopeless.

Mike let a loud scream of frustration escape his lips, muffling it in the pillow. He flopped over onto his back and stared at the ceiling. His eyes traced all the cracks and stripped paint from hanging and removing various posters throughout the years. His mind drifted back to when he hung the latest poster on his ceiling. It had been a birthday gift from Will. It was black and white with sharp neon green letters that read "Joy Division". It was one of Will's favorite bands and after playing many a record for Mike, he finally grew to love them as much as Will. He did genuinely enjoy the music, but he'd be lying if he said part of his love for them didn't come from the way Will's eyes lit up when Mike told him he loved them.

He remembered the day clearly. Will told him he wanted to give him his gift in private. So, after the birthday party, Mike and Will made their way upstairs and into Mike's room.

"I hope you like it." Will said shyly as he handed Mike the rolled-up poster with a blue ribbon tied around it to keep it closed. Mike took the gift from Will, their hands brushing together in a way that made them both blush. He slowly untied the ribbon and unrolled the large paper. His eyes went wide, he'd never seen any poster like this in any of the shops in town. That must mean the Will had sent away for it special. Mike could only imagine how many lawns Will had mowed to afford such a gift.

"Will..." Mike was at a loss for words, which was a feat to say the least.

"I know it's not much," Will backtracked, "I saw in a magazine and it looked so much like something you would like...You don't have to hang it if you don't want to..."

"Will," Mike stepped forward taking Will's hand in his own. "I love it, it's awesome!" Mike was rubbing slow circles over Will's knuckles. He didn't even bother to hide his flushed cheeks. His only concern was

reassuring Will. "I'm gonna hang it right now." Mike turned his head assessing the walls to find a place of honor for Will's gift. He looked to his left and then his right, never letting go of Will's hand. "I know! I'm going to hang it on the ceiling." Mike finally let go of Will's hand to retrieve some tape from his desk.

"What?" Will's face turned in confusion.

"I'm going to hang it on the ceiling." Mike repeated himself, still digging through his desk drawer.

"Why?" Will was looking at the ceiling as if the answer was somewhere up there.

"Nancy has lots of posters on her ceiling. She says that's where you hang your favorites." Mike finally found the tape and turned his attention back to Will, who still looked confused. Mike took a step closer to Will. "That way it's the last thing I see before I go to sleep and the first thing I see when I wake up." Will looked like he might cry at Mike's words. Mike smiled and then observed the ceiling carefully trying to figure out how to approach the hanging process. He was short, and even with the help of his desk chair, he wouldn't be able to reach high enough. Will suddenly perked up with an idea.

"Come over here," Will said as he climbed up on the bed, standing to face Mike. Mike didn't understand but he approached Will just the same. Will must have picked up on the lack of comprehension, so he continued. "I'll climb on your shoulders and I should be able to reach the ceiling." Mike's heart dropped into his stomach at the thought. He didn't know why he suddenly felt so sweaty and short of breath. The party were no strangers to shoulder rides, especially with Will due to his small stature, but typically it was Dustin who opted to do the carrying. Will swiveled his wrist in a circular motion instructing Mike to turn around. Mike slowly turned and braced his legs for Will to climb onto his shoulders. His heart was racing and when he felt the warmth of Will's thigh against the side of his face, he just about leapt out of his skin. He did his best to hold himself steady despite the lightheaded feeling Will's weight was giving him. As much as he wanted to close his eyes and fully immerse himself in the sensation, he didn't want to risk dropping Will, so he focused on the task at hand.

"Okay, I'm ready, hand me the tape." Mike lifted the tape above his head and felt Will's fingers encircle his own. He froze in place. "I got it Mike...You can let go of the tape, Mike, I got it." Mike released Will's hand and tried to ignore the swoop in stomach every time Will

shifted his weight around Mike's head. He could barely hear the stifled groans Will was letting out as he stretched to reach the ceiling. Will's thighs were covering his ears, making all of the noises he was making sound like they were coming from under water. Mike was drowning in Will and he was about ready to gasp for breath. With one final tense whine Will stretched his arms as far as they would go to reach the last corner of the poster. "Got it!" Will exhaled as he let his weight slump back against Mike. He felt Will brace himself against Mike's head as he slid down his back and onto the bed once again.

"What do you think?" Will finally asked once he was standing next to Mike once again. Mike was still trying to collect himself, so he didn't respond. Will seemed to think he had yet another solution. "Here.." he grabbed Mike's hand and pulled him over to the bed before laying down and patting the spot next to him. Mike looked bewildered. "Lay down, Mike...That way you can get the full affect." It took him a moment, but he finally descended onto the bed next to Will; their bodies touching from shoulder to toes on the twin size bed. Mike looked up and saw the poster taped, slightly crooked, to the ceiling above his bed. His stress alleviated as it was replaced with overwhelming fondness for the boy lying next to him. He was comforted by the thought of seeing Will's gift every morning and night, knowing it would remind him of how lucky he was to have this boy in his life.

Mike spoke before he could think better of it, "I love you, Will." Will's face turned a light pink as he turned his head to meet Mike's gaze. He flashed him a nervous, but genuine smile.

"I love you too, Mike." They laid there for a while longer until Mike's mom knocked on the door asking if Will was planning to spend the night; which of course he did. They spent the rest of the night talking and laughing, only quieting down when Nancy burst in the room telling them to shut it.

Mike couldn't help the smile that spread across his face thinking of lying next to his best friend all night. He remembered clearly waking up with Will's face in the crook of his neck, his arm slung over Mike's midsection and their legs tangled together. He remembered the soft sighs of contentment that came from Will's lips as he nuzzled impossibly closer, his hot breath on his neck and his hands gripping the loose fabric of Mike's t-shirt. Mike knew, distantly, that it wasn't appropriate for two boys to be holding each other like this, but he

pushed those thoughts away, because the feeling of Will's warm body pressed close to his was just too good to pass up. Instead, he wrapped his arms even tighter around Will and pressed his face into the mess of Will's hair. He smelled vaguely of coconut from his mom's shampoo.

Currently, Mike was running his hands up and down his own chest and stomach, similar to the way Will's fingers had brushed lightly over the exposed skin where Mike's shirt had ridden up. He thought about how soft the skin on Will's face was when he placed a kiss on his forehead. He remembered the responding moan Will let out from the kiss; he seemed so small and delicate in Mike's arms. He wondered how different he would feel in his arms now. Would his grip be stronger from the toned muscles of his arms? Would his skin be even warmer than Mike remembered? It looked warmer from the tan. Mike's hands drifted lower on his hips as he wondered if Will's hair would still smell the same as it had that night. Everything else on his body seemed to have changed, so why not his hair?

He considered the way Nancy would always gossip on the phone about how good Johnathon smelled with his new cologne. Did Will wear cologne now too? Would he smell manly? Would it reek like the wind behind Billy Hargrove? Or would it smell good like it did on Steve Harrington? Mike never consciously accepted the way he would lean just a little closer to Steve to get a whiff of him. But currently, he was so exhausted that he just let his mind drift over all of the thoughts that he usually ignored. Will smelling like Steve was a lot more intriguing than it should have been.

His hands drifted even lower until he was cupping himself, already hard. He thought about Will; his hair, his eyes, his lips...He undid his button and unzipped his fly...Will's arms, Will's legs, Will's stomach... He dipped his fingers below the waistband of his boxers and gripped his length. He imagined long graceful fingers in place of his own, running up and down his shaft. His imagination ran wild. Will climbing over Mike, a leg on either side, straddling him. He leans down and offers Mike the softest smile he's ever seen before placing a soft kiss to Mike's lips. Mike's hand sped up as he thought about Will running his hands down Mike's bare chest until he reached the desired destination. Will grasped him tightly and started pumping while peppering kisses down his jaw and neck. Mike lost it at the thought of Will latching his teeth into the pulse point of his neck. He came in short bursts and turned his head into the pillow to stifle the

loud moan issued as he came down from his orgasm.

When he had fully recovered, he looked at the mess on his stomach and for moment felt guilty for allowing himself to think about his friend in this way. He grabbed his discarded shirt from the floor and wiped himself off. He looked up at the poster on the ceiling once more before covering his face with his arms and letting out a groan of frustration. Yeah...he's really fucked.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

So, that was chapter three. I feel like most fics are about Will pining after Mike, so I wanted to add the few that I've read that display a crushing Mike...Let me know what you thought!

## 4. Facade

### Notes for the Chapter:

Geez, sorry I always take forever to update...But here is chapter 4, enjoy!

Mike isn't totally sure how he let this happen. He keeps playing the events of the last week in his head over and over hoping to shed some light on his current predicament. You see, Mike knew better; he knew much better. If there is anything he has learned in the first two weeks of school, it's that he cannot trust himself around Will; more specifically, this new, rather brazen and almost cocky Will. It's not that Will is obnoxious, it just seems that for the first time he knows his worth. He is aware that he looks good and is not afraid to walk around shirtless with his friends when it's just a little too hot from the lingering summer heat. Beyond his looks, he no longer hides his new artwork from his friends. He shows them proudly when he is particularly fond of a piece he's been working on. Mike has always been well aware; perhaps a little too aware, of his best friend's talent, and he is thrilled that Will sees it too. Mike just didn't expect Will's newfound demeanor to affect him this much.

Expected or not, Mike has come to accept his odd situation. He can't quite put words to his admiration of Will just yet, but he knows it's there. This is why he can't believe that he allowed his friends to convince him to go to the party at the lake. They'd all known about The Lake Party...it happens in the first month of school every year and it's strictly for high schoolers-no kids allowed. Mike and his friends had biked down to the lake for the last two years to sneak a peek at their future. They had been enamored by the idea of drinking and dancing and the inevitable skinny dipping that always takes place. Nancy once said that no one ever thinks to bring a suit and by the time everyone is wasted they no longer care. Mike nodded along with her story, but he suspected that everyone purposely forgot to bring their suits, so they'd have an excuse to strip down and act on all the teenage hormones that are kept under wraps in the daylight.

Most parties are for popular kids only, but The Lake Party had always seemed to draw kids from every level on the pyramid. It was the one event of the year where there was no bullying, no boundaries...

Everyone simply enjoyed themselves; partying and talking to people they'd pretend they didn't know the following Monday. For years, Mike has been looking forward to the Lake Party, which is probably why his friends cannot understand why he's acting like he doesn't want to go.

"Mike! It's THE PARTY!" Lucas says emphasizing each word. "We've been looking forward to it FOREVER!"

"I just don't feel like it...I mean come on guys, who wants to swim in a muddy lake with a bunch of kids we don't even like?" Mike was trying his best to seem nonchalant, but he knew he was coming off as nervous.

"Ummmmm, let's see..." Dustin finally chimed in once he managed to pull his jaw off the floor. "One, drinks...two, drunk girls...three, drunk naked girls..." he held the three fingers he'd just been counting on in the air and waved them around as if to emphasize his point. Mike just shrugged.

"It's not like any of those girls will notice us anyway, we're the only kids in the AV club and we talk about D&D like...all the time."

"So? D&D is awesome." Lucas moved from his current seat to plop himself down next to Mike and drape an arm around his shoulder. "Besides, no one's gonna be thinking about D&D while they're drinking and dancing and...swimming..." Lucas adds the last with a wink in Mike's direction. Mike didn't know what else to say so he just sat there nervously staring at his shoes. "Come on Mike, what is this really about? The Party is all you've talked about all summer. Why the sudden change?" Mike couldn't stand the questioning anymore and he shot up from his seat.

"I don't know! Ok, I just don't want to go, it's dumb!"

"Mike..." Dustin slowly approached Mike the way you'd approach a rabid bear. "Are you, like...nervous about something?" Mike grew suddenly still and he started to breathe a little faster. Did they know the real reason why he didn't want to go? "Cuz, I've had gym with you for years and I can tell you, you've got nothing to be ashamed of."

"What?!" Mike's head shot up in shock. Before he could say more he heard laughter from behind him. He whipped around to see Will leaning against the door frame in nothing more than a pair of Johnathan's old gym shorts. Damn his unnaturally quiet steps. His hair was all disarrayed as if he'd been running his hands through it and he was tossing an apple between his hands. He had that cocky

shit eating grin that had become a more frequent guest as of late.

"Always the thoughtful one, Dustin." Will said to his loveable friend before turning his gaze from Dustin to Mike and laughing again. "I think Mike is well aware of his..." Will pushed off the door frame and took a few steps towards Mike "...assets." With the last word Will took a bite of his apple without breaking eye contact with Mike. He chewed slowly and used his thumb to wipe a little juice from the corner of his mouth. God, Mike was so hypnotized he didn't even think about the fact that Dustin and Lucas were standing right beside him. He just stared wide eyed as Will smirked once more and placed his hand on Mike's shoulder. "Aren't you Mike?" Mike finally broke eye contact with Will to look at the hand on his shoulder. He couldn't say anything; he couldn't even think with Will's hand burning a hole through his shirt. Will just laughed and allowed his hand to slide down Mike's arm and linger just a little too long on the top of his hand. "I'll take the stunned silence as a yes." Mike turned his attention back to Will. They just stared at each other as if they were having a silent conversation. Will cocked his head to the side and looked Mike up and down before smiling. His grin wasn't smug this time though, it was sweet. It was the smile Mike knew better than his own, and it immediately put him at ease. He let out the breath he didn't realize he'd been holding.

"Well, if it's not nerves, then what is it?" Dustin asked with a mouth full of Will's apple that he snatched from his hand without a thought. Will just laughed. Dustin knew he wasn't going to finish it. He had a habit of taking the first bite of something and just leaving the rest and it annoyed Dustin to no end. Mike watched the scene before him in silence. He still didn't have an answer and Will's still close proximity was making it impossible to think. Will looked at Mike a second longer before sighing.

"Come on guys, don't push him..." Will's eyes dropped to the ground and he sniffled a little. "I mean, if Mike doesn't want to play with us..." Will sniffled again before looking up at Mike with the cutest damn puppy dog eyes Mike has ever seen. Dustin and Lucas leaned a little closer to the scene to watch Mike's facial expression. They knew he was close to breaking. Mike never has been able to say no to Will and everyone knows it. Mike just huffed out a breath flopped his long arms against his side in a defeated manner.

"Fine! I'll go...geez." Dustin and Lucas cheered while Will threw his arms around Mike's neck.

"We'll have fun, Mike." Will whispered against the shell of Mike's ear. Mike's arms twitched with the desire to wrap them around Will's waist and pull him even closer. But he didn't have the chance, as Will released him and flashed him a sweet smile that looked almost a little vulnerable. It was a brief crack in his confident façade, but Mike saw it...he knows he did.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

Okay, so I know that was short...But I'm already working on the next chapter and I think you guys are going to love it! Let me know what you guys think and what you wanna see happen next!

## 5. Ready or Not

When the night of the party rolled around Mike was a mess of nerves. Just like on the first day of school Mike was shoulder deep in his closet trying to find something cool to wear. First, he considered dressing up a little, the party is definitely casual, but Mike thought he might be able to set himself apart from the crowd. That thought was quickly squashed when Nancy walked into his room without knocking.

"Hey, Mike, Mom wants to..." Nancy stopped in her tracks when she saw Mike standing in front of his dresser mirror, tucking his dark blue dress shirt into his black jeans. His hair is slicked to the side with what Nancy assumes is her father's hair gel that is sitting open lid on Mike's desk. "Why are you all dressed up? I thought you and your nerdy friends were going to Lake Party tonight." Mike stood frozen for a moment before huffing out a frustrated sigh and unbuttoning his shirt. He knew dressing up was a stupid idea, what was he thinking? He was practically frantic as he pulled at last few buttons. "Hey, what's wrong?" Nancy was as concerned as she was confused.

"Nothing." Mike spits out a little angrier than he intended. "And haven't you ever heard of knocking? I could have been naked!" Mike was pulling his shirt off completely leaving him only in his jeans.

"What?" Nancy laughs as she puts her hands up to block her view of Mike's naked chest. "Are you gonna punish me by getting naked right now?" She dramatically covers her eyes with her arm and leans against the open door. "Mike please, I hardly deserve such an awful fate!" Mike can still hear her muffled laughter through her arms when he approaches her and grabs her by her shoulder.

"Hahaha you're hilarious, now can you get out?" With that, Mike pushes Nancy a foot closer to the hall. She resists a little as she moves her hands away from her face.

"I'm just messing with you, Mike...Relax little brother, it's not your fault you're as pale as the undead." Mike just rolls his eyes and continues to push his sister out of the room. "Okay, Okay, I'm sorry." She pushes back with a little more force and forces her way back into Mike's room and walks right past him to sit on his bed. "In all seriousness, What's with the fancy digs?" Mike should have expected this from Nancy. Ever since the upside down, she has become much

more interested in Mike's life. She still teases him incessantly, as is her duty according to her. However, on occasion when she can tell that something is bothering Mike, she won't leave him alone until he tells her what's wrong. Mike usually feels better after getting everything off his chest and Nancy actually gives pretty good advice, not that he will ever let her know that. But how is he supposed to explain his frustration this time. It's not like he can come right out and tell her that he's obsessed with his best friend and can't think straight when he's around (no pun intended). That he's so wigged out that he can't figure out what to where to a stupid party where he'll likely get covered in beer and dirt anyway.

"It's nothing, Nancy, okay, I'm just trying to decide what to wear to the party." Mike took hold of the door handle, trying to give Nancy a hint to leave. She just crossed her legs and made herself more comfortable on Mike's bed, letting him know that he wasn't getting rid of her that easy. Mike rolled his eyes and took a seat at his desk, admitting defeat.

"So, what's really going on? I know you've been biding down to sneak a peek at the party for years. You and your little friends aren't exactly stealthy..." She laughs at the memory.

"And? What's your point?" Mike says with a shrug.

"My point is that you know the party is casual, you know that everyone is wearing cutoffs and t-shirts." Nancy strokes her imaginary beard with a contemplative hum. "So, I was just trying to figure out why you were one step below your snowball outfit when I walked in." Mike just looked at his hands, he didn't have it in him to come up with an excuse right now. He was supposed to meet his friends in less than an hour and the knot in his stomach was growing worse by the second.

"Nancy...can you...can you just help me pick something to wear so I won't look like a complete idiot?" He looked up at Nancy with pleading eyes. He didn't want to talk about it right now. He wasn't ready to open all the containers that held his carefully tucked away emotions. Deep down he was pretty sure he knew what these feelings were, but he wasn't ready to come to terms with them right now. Nancy seemed to pick up on the shift in her little brother's demeanor. She smiled and walked over to his closet. She searched for a moment before pulling out an old pair of kakis and an oversized open knit sweater.

"First things first; wash that goop out of your hair." She said, pointing

at Mike's slicked back hair. "You look like an extra on the Adams Family." She then tossed her clothing selections at Mike; the shirt landing on his head. "Shorts aren't really your thing. Wear these, they're casual enough that you'll fit in, but just different enough to set you apart from the crowd." Her explanation was so simple and easy. Mike was stunned; how did she manage to pull together an outfit that encompasses everything Mike wanted without even having to think about it. It really wasn't fair. She started to walk out of the room but turned around when she reached the door. "When you're ready to talk about it, Mike..." She offered him a soft smile and Mike nodded in understanding.

"Thanks Nancy." And with that she walked away leaving Mike to pull himself together. He took a quick shower to wash the gel out of his hair as instructed. When he reached his room, he dried off quickly and turned to look at his naked form in the mirror. He stared for a moment before deciding it was too quiet. He put on one of his favorite albums; Bowie: Tonight, which of course he borrowed from Will years ago and eventually was told to keep because he liked it so much. Will was so thoughtful that way. Once the music was playing, Mike resumed checking himself out. He ran his hands down his flat stomach and the vague outline of his ribs. He turned to look at his not flat, but not exactly filled behind. He swayed a little from side to side and shook out his hair causing droplets of water to fling out all around him. He mouthed along with the words while he pulled on his boxers. The song turned more upbeat and Mike struck a pose before full on head banging and air guitar. He jumped around and sang the words at the top of his lungs; determined to quiet the voices of uncertainty in his head.

After about a half hour of hyping himself up, Mike was dressed and ready. He was taking one last look at himself when he heard a car horn outside. He rushed to the window with excitement only to be let down when he saw Steve Harrington's car where he'd hoped he would see Johnathon's. Dustin jumped out of the front seat and waved at Mike signaling him to come down. Reluctantly, Mike made his way downstairs. When he made it to the front door, Dustin was already waiting on the other side.

"Mike! Come on man, let's go!" Dustin reached across the threshold and grabbed Mike by his sleeve. Mike looked behind Dustin to Steve who was waiting in the driver's seat of his car. He sees Lucas sitting in the backseat singing along to whatever is playing on the radio.

"Where's Will?" Mike pulled his arm back from Dustin. "I thought Johnathon was driving us." Mike looked around the yard as though Will was going to jump out of one of the bushes at any second.

"Will said he would meet us there, now come on." Dustin reached for Mike's arm again.

"Why?"

"Why what?"

"Why is he meeting us there?" Mike was refusing to budge, and Dustin was starting to get frustrated.

"I don't know why, Mike."

"Well what did he say?" Dustin huffed out a frustrated sigh.

"He just said he was going to meet us there."

"When?"

"When what?"

"When did he say he was going to meet us there?" Dustin finally gave up on trying to usher Mike out the front door.

"I called him earlier to tell him that Steve agreed to drive us, and Will said not to pick him up because he would meet us there." Dustin enunciated each word slowly, trying desperately to make Mike understand. Mike didn't make any motion toward the car. "Mike, relax, your boyfriend will be there." Mike's face contorted immediately from confused to panicked.

"What?! No, Will's not...I don't..." Mike was babbling now, and Dustin was amused. He couldn't help rubbing dirt in the wound just a little bit.

"Jeez, Mike...did I hit a nerve or something?" Mike was searching desperately for something to say when he saw Lucas walking up behind Dustin.

"The party's waiting guys!" Lucas was just getting ready to haul them both to the car when he examined the curious state they were both in. Dustin trying not to laugh and Mike looking exposed as hell.

"What's going on?" Dustin spoke up first.

"Mike here, is just a little concerned that Will isn't with us."

"I am not!" Mike finally awoke from his paralyzed state. "I was just confused, that's all!" Lucas observed for another moment before grabbing Dustin by his shoulder and giving him a serious look. Dustin returned Lucas's accusing look with an exasperated one. They stared at each other for another minute or so, apparently having a silent conversation. Eventually, Dustin huffed a laugh and shook his head.

"Sorry, Mike, I was just messing with you." Dustin slapped Mike on

the shoulder and Lucas walked over to stand beside Mike and throw an arm around his shoulder reassuringly.

"Let's go, Mike. Will's gonna meet us there and we're gonna have fun!"

Mike looked between the two of them trying to figure out what was going on. He felt Lucas pull him toward the car and he gave in reluctantly. When they all were in the car and buckled up, Steve finally turned the key and sped off into the street.

"You shitheads are gonna have the best time, I still remember my first time at the party..." Steve continued his trip down memory lane while Mike stared out the window. The night of the party had finally arrived.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

Here is chapter five, let me know what you guys think! You're gonna love the next chapter, I think!

## 6. The Party

### Notes for the Chapter:

Here is Chapter 6! I hope you guys like it!

Mike walked throughout the crowd of rowdy, drunk teens. He grabbed a cup and poured himself his fourth beer from the keg with a huff of frustration. Where the hell is Will? I mean, if he wasn't gonna show, he could at least have said something. It was his damn puppy dog eyes that made Mike agree to go in the first place. He didn't even want to come. He could see Dustin and Lucas talking to a couple of girls down by the water. A girl with long red hair was hanging off of Lucas who must have said something hilarious judging by the way she was bent over laughing. The one Dustin was speaking to; a girl with short curly brown hair was standing upright, and while she was holding a beer she seemed much more in control of her faculties. Dustin spoke to her animatedly as he waved his hands in the air in front of him, sloshing some of his beer onto Lucas' sleeve. He made a disgruntled noise and Dustin gave him an apologetic look. The girl with curly brown hair laughed as she watched Lucas and Dustin argue. The girls were either really cool or really drunk, because Mike knew first-hand how obnoxious those two were when they argued; let alone when alcohol was introduced into the situation.

A couple of girls walked past Mike and looked him up and down. One of them even asked him to dance, but he was too irritated by Will's absence to join in on the fun. After another beer or two, Mike was feeling a little hazy, so he walked over to a nearby tree and rested against it. He crossed his arms pulling his oversized sweater more tightly around him while he wondered for the hundredth time this evening why Will would bail on them. All of the sudden Mike felt something hit him on the top of his head.

"Ouch!" Mike rubbed the top of his head while he picked up the pinecone that had ricocheted off of it. "What the fuck?"

"Pssst." Mike looked around to see where that noise had come from... He was a little buzzed. A moment later he felt another pinecone smack him in the head, followed by another "pssst". Okay, he was more than a little buzzed. "Hey!" someone whisper yelled. "Up here." Mike looked up and saw...he had to let his eyes adjust for a moment

around the figure who was two branches up. His eyes came in to focus on none other than Will...sitting in a tree...Will...in a tree... Will is up in a tree...Mike's buzzed mind was taking a moment to absorb the situation. Finally, he came to terms with it.

"What are you doing up there?" Will just laughed and raised his hands in the air to display his sketchpad and pencil. "You're drawing? In a tree?" Will nodded his head, still laughing. "Oh...Why?" Mike rubbed his head and was reminded of the bump up there and what it had resulted from. "And why did you throw a pinecone at me?"

"I threw a pinecone at you to get your attention...Whispering wasn't doing the trick." Will leaned back and rested his head against the bark. He was wearing a pair of ripped jeans and a raggy old t-shirt that appeared to be splattered with paint. Mike's mother would have beat him with a stick if she caught him leaving the house like that. But Will's mother was always more relaxed about things like that. She didn't much care about appearances as long as her kids were happy.

"Oh...and you're drawing in a tree...at a party because...." Mike was still rubbing his head in confusion. Will shook his head with a chuckle.

"I was inspired." He said with his hands extended out to the party going on around them. Mike turned to observe the borage of drunk teens. "And I wanted to get a better view of everyone." Mike squinted his eyes, attempting to see what Will could possibly find inspirational. He looked back up at Will to see his glassy eyed expression as he looked out over the scene. Will's mind was a wonder; the way he saw the world was amazing. To be able to take anything he sees and turn it into something beautiful; especially after everything he'd been through.

"What's so inspirational about this?"

"Just look Mike." Will stated so plainly as if the scene before them should speak for itself. "Practically the whole school is here. Everyone from the jocks to the nerds; we're all here together enjoying life without all the boundaries we have at school." Mike looked once again over all of his classmates laughing and dancing together. He could see Troy toss a beer to the captain of the chess team. "This party is magic, Mike." Mike knew he'd never be able to understand the depths of Will's mind, but he was more than happy to watch. So, he did just that. He watched the way the light breeze was making his bangs flow over his bright eyes that were reflecting the lake that was reflecting the moon. He was beautiful, and Mike was staring. But

with the alcohol flowing through his veins he couldn't even bring himself to care; not even when Will turned his gaze to stare back at Mike.

Moments passed, and they kept staring at each other. Will's lips curved into a gentle smile that Mike couldn't help but echo. He felt himself leaning in to get closer to Will which is when he was met with the realization that Will was still up in a tree while Mike was on the ground. Mike was extremely frustrated with this as he felt the sudden need to be closer to Will. He made a move to reach for the first branch above his head. He grabbed hold of it and hoisted himself up catching his feet on a bend in the trunk to begin his climb.

"Mike, what are you doing?" Will looked concerned as a slightly sloshed Mike used his new footing to reach for another branch and climb higher. Mike didn't answer him; as his clumsy six-foot form was too focused on the task of reaching Will. "Mike..." Will reached his hands out to somehow help Mike despite him being too far away. "...Mike, this isn't a good idea...Mike, you could fall." Will set his sketch pad gingerly on a neighboring branch and he began climbing down from his place in the tree. He used his upper arms to hold his weight and slung one of his legs over the branch he'd been sitting on to slip down below it. He landed on the branch below it just as Mike was pulling himself up onto the same branch. Will placed one of his feet on the branch next to him to balance and reached down to grab Mike under his arms. Mike's relentless determination combined with Will's guidance led Mike to a standing position in front of Will. It took Mike a moment to gather himself but when he did he locked eyes with Will once again. Mike braced his hands on the trunk of the tree; his hands on either side of Will's head. Will slid his hands down to Mike's waist to help him keep his balance.

"Will..." Mike half whispered as he let one of his hands trace Will's jaw. Will was so close now. Mike could see every minute detail on his beautiful face. Will froze for a moment; his big doe eyes trained on Mike's.

"Mike..." Will touched Mike's hand; softly at first and then he wrapped his fingers around it. "Mike, you're drunk," Will warned as he pulled Mike's hand away from his face.

"I'm not drunk, Will." Mike sighed as he placed a hand gingerly on Will's hip and brushed his fingers against the exposed skin where Will's shirt had ridden up when he climbed down. Will lifted his right hand to brush a few of Mike's dark curls out of his face before resting

his hand against Mike's chest. Mike was sure that Will could feel his rapidly beating heart. Will turned his head to the side and looked deeply at Mike as if he were trying to solve a puzzle. Mike felt as if he was being tested and he was desperate to pass. So, he moved closer and slid his arm further around Will to the small of his back. "Will, I-" just then Mike was cut off by a shriek and rambunctious laughter quickly approaching them. Mike whipped his head around to see what the commotion was, causing him to lose his footing and stumble. Will quickly wrapped his arms around Mike's waist to steady him but all that did was pull him down as well. Will landed on the branch, a leg on either side, straddling it. Mike fell a little farther as he hung off the branch.

"Hey Mike!" There was yelling from behind them. "You okay?" Dustin was running toward the two of them; Lucas and the girls they were talking to, on his heels. Mike looked up at Will in shock and then looked around as if he wasn't too sure how he had ended up in this position. Suddenly he felt someone grabbing at his legs.

"Hey! Let go!" Mike was flinging his legs around barely missing Dustin's face.

"Mike, Mike stop, I'm trying to help!" Dustin yelled as Mike continued to flail about until he felt a hand cover his own. He looked up and saw Will with another one of those sweet smiles on his face.

"Mike" Will spoke softly while he stroked Mike's hand. "Stop fighting, let them help you." Mike instantly stilled himself and allowed Dustin to hold his legs. While Lucas reached up to balance his hips. "Okay, let go Mike, they got you." Mike let go of the branch and allowed himself to fall back against Lucas and Dustin. The two were relatively strong but Mike was still the tallest of the party and despite their best efforts he still fell to the ground with a small thud. Mike looked up at his friends and then at the dirt and grass around him. It took him several moments grasp his current position and how he wound up there. But when he did, he looked elated.

"Will!" Mike called from the ground. "They didn't catch me Will!" He yelled accusingly as he looked at Dustin and Lucas. Will just laughed at how vocal and childlike Mike was in his inebriated state; well more so than usual...Mike attempted to stand, and he looked an awful lot like a baby deer as he did so. Dustin and Lucas each grabbed one of Mike's arms to help him up.

"What were you guys doing in a tree anyway?" Lucas asked while Mike slung an arm around his shoulder.

"Will was being inspired" Mike answered as he turned his gaze up toward Will who was still half lying half sitting on the branch Mike had just fallen from.

"He was what?"

"I was drawing." Will reached above him to grab his sketchpad and pencils before he climbed the rest of the way down. "I was inspired by everything." He added before he jumped the last few feet and landed in front of his friends.

"Well, did you finish? 'Cause everyone is starting to head to the water, and...you know what that means!" Dustin was really excited, but he attempted to quiet his voice so the girls standing a few feet away wouldn't hear them. Mike obviously didn't pick up on the hushed tones because he decided to raise his voice instead.

"Skinny dipping!" Mike turned and grabbed Dustin by his shoulders, shaking him. Dustin looked a little embarrassed when he heard the girls laugh behind them. Mike glanced toward the noise. "Well hello ladies." Mike sing-songed before taking a step back from his friends and attempting to pull his sweater over his head. He still didn't have the best balance and he kept stepping back until he ran into Will. He swung around as if he were surprised to see Will there. He offered Will a toothy smile before putting his arms around Will's neck. "Will" he whispered, "it's time to skinny dip."

"Mike, I don't think now is a great time for you to be in water." Will smiled and took a step back from Mike to grab his sketchpad.

"Will, no! You can't leave! We have to go swimming!" Mike was following after Will.

"Mike, come on. You can barely stand, man." Mike felt a hand on his shoulder as Lucas approached him from behind.

"Okay, that's it!" Mike stepped away from them all with a smug smile. He grabbed the back collar of his sweater and pulled it over his head, displaying his bare chest. Mike was still too tall for his own good and as skinny as ever, but he has always had a certain calm about his appearance, a confidence in his mismatched features of pale skin and dark hair, his long limbs that threw him off balance, they were all a part of what made him who he was. Mike couldn't help but notice the slight blush that rose on Will's cheeks at Mike's half-dressed state. He glowed with pride at that redness on Will's face and he couldn't help his dramatic personality from stepping up his show.

"I..." Mike pointed at himself, dramatically, "am not drunk, that sweater is just too big..." he pointed accusingly to the discarded

sweater on the ground. "It was throwing me off, and I will show you." Mike put one foot directly in front of the other and attempted to copy what he'd seen on TV when a drunk driver has to walk in a straight line. He stumbled here and there but managed to take several steps without falling over. "See? I'm fine!" he put his arms up in victory. "Now come on!" With that, Mike booked it toward the water where a few dozen teens were already splashing each other with water. He turned around when he reached the dock to see if his friends were behind him. "Let's go guys!" Mike then proceeded to unbutton his jeans and tug them down his pale white legs. He was struggling to get his pants past his shoes when Lucas and Dustin exchanged looks before turning to Will with questioning looks.

"Well, I guess we should follow him...You know, to make sure he's okay" Dustin proposed. Lucas and Will huffed at the suggestion.

"Right..." Lucas laughs.

"Your concern is touching, Dustin" Will added.

"What are you guys waiting for?!" Mike yelled as he continued his attempts to pull his shoes off without falling over. The rest of the party watched until they heard the girls they were with whispering to each other.

"Well boys," The one with red hair said, "It is really hot out here tonight and we are going to swim." To emphasize her point she pulled her t shirt over her head leaving her in her white bra. Dustin and Lucas gawked openly as they were unable to come up with anything coherent to say. The girls just laughed as they waltzed away.

"Okay, You guys do what you want but I'm following them." Dustin announced; his words only a little slurred as he pulled off his own shirt and booked it toward the dock where the girls were standing. Lucas and Will just shrugged their shoulders before they followed the others. By the time they got to the water Dustin was already in the water in a splash war with the curly haired girl.

"Hey!" Mike called from a few feet away, sitting on the dock still attempting to pull off his shoes. "You made it!" Lucas looked down at the mess that was his drunk friend before looking back to the Dustin and the girls.

"It's okay Lucas." Will patted him on the shoulder. "I got Mike, you go have fun." Lucas was always the most responsible of the group. Will could see the battle he had going with his conscience over helping Mike versus having fun.

"Are you sure? he's trashed." Lucas looked at his friend who had managed to pull off his pants earning him some cheering from the teens already in the water.

"He'll listen to me." Will assured him with a smile. Lucas gave Mike an amused look while he watched him strut his stuff up and down the dock. Apparently, he was a hit as the cheering continued.

"He always has been attention whore, hasn't he?" Lucas laughed. Dustin swam up the shore where Lucas and Will were standing.

"Come on guys!" he yelled as one of the girls called his name.

"Seriously, Lucas go ahead, I got Mike." Will said once again, playfully nudging his friend toward the water.

"I just feel bad."

"Come on, Lucas!" Dustin called once again before swimming right up to the edge. "He'd rather have Will all to himself, anyway!"

"Dustin!" Lucas hushed him before giving Will an apologetic look.

"Relax!" Dustin whisper yelled. "Will isn't blind!" Lucas looked embarrassed while Will bit his lip to keep from laughing.

"I, uh...we..." Lucas stammered.

"No worries, buddy," Will slapped his back. "This will all be a hangover tomorrow." He watched as Lucas pulled off his pants and swam toward Dustin before smacking him upside the head. Dustin looked offended while Lucas was apparently chewing him out. Will just shook his head at his drunk friends before walking over to Mike who was still giving his strip tease. "Hey Mike," Will rubbed his shoulder gently.

"Will!" Mike wrapped his arms around Will and began tugging at his shirt. "I think you're wearing a little too much clothes..." Mike whispered in Will's ear. Will blushed a little and let out a nervous laugh at Mike's bold behavior. He kept his eye on the crowd behind them in the water who luckily had all returned their focus to each other with the ending of Mike's show. Will ran his hands down Mike's arms before gripping his hands and pulling them from his shirt.

"Come on, Mike, let's go." Will spoke softly to his friend.

"But Will! The party is just getting started!" Mike pouted trying to wrap his arms around Will once again. "Don't you want to swim with me?" Will felt bad at the crushed tone in Mike's voice. But he knew Mike was not in control of himself right now and he didn't want him to do something public that he might regret.

"Mike, there's nothing I'd rather do than swim with you, but I'm a little tired." Will thought it would be easier to lie than to try and

Make Mike understand. "Why don't we go to my house? We can have a sleepover, we haven't had one of those in ages!" Mike's mood seemed to rise significantly at Will's suggestion.

"That sounds awesome! Let's go!" Mike began to walk away gripping Will's wrist.

"Hey Mike, why don't we grab your clothes first?" Will laughed as he reached down to grab Mike's pants and shoes. The two grabbed the rest of Mike's clothing and Will went back to the tree to get his sketchpad before they made their way back to the main road. Will's house was just a short walk away from the lake, so he had told Johnathon he would walk home. Johnathon reluctantly agreed promising not to tell their mother. Even now she was nervous at the idea of Will walking anywhere alone. The two of them stood just outside the wooded area close to the road. Will was attempting to get Mike's pants on but Mike wasn't making it easy as he continued reaching for Will the whole time.

"You're cute" Mike smiled and poked the tip of Will's nose while Will was prodding Mike to step his right leg into his pants.

"Thanks," Will laughed. "Now please, Mike, just one more leg and you'll be dressed." Will felt a little like a mother trying to dress her toddler, except the toddler is over six feet and weighs more than the mother. Finally, Mike complied, and Will pulled his pants up his legs and around his hips. "Okay, now just button them and we can go." Will instructed. Mike nodded his head and fumbled with his fly for a moment before huffing in frustration.

"What is wrong with these pants!" Mike yelled. Will tried not to laugh at his dramatic outburst. "I mean, what is the point of buttons? Who invented them? What kind of sick asshole thought this was a good idea?" Mike waved his hands in the air, walked in a circle continuing his rant.

"Oh I know...It's probably those Russians again," Will laughed. "They probably thought of the zipper too!" Will threw his hands in the air. "Those bastards!" Mike just continued shaking his head, unaware of Will's teasing.

"It's a plot, I'm telling you Will, we need to do something about this."

"Tomorrow we'll start planning our revenge, but for now why don't you just let me help you?" Will reached for Mike's fly and Mike lunged away.

"What are you doing?" Mike looked shocked.

"I'm helping you with your pants." Will explained, reaching for Mike

once again.

"No!" Mike jerked away again. Will just laughed.

"Come on, Mike, quit playing." Will reached for Mike's arm to steady him.

"Make me!" Mike took a step back and chuckled.

"Seriously?" Will studied Mike's amused expression before sighing.

"Okay, you want to play it that way?" Will took a sudden lunge toward Mike and tacked him to the ground. Will straddled Mike's flailing legs and reached for his fly in an attempt to button it. Mike kept shoeing Will's hand away with a laugh. Will reached for his arms in an effort to pin them above his head but before he could, Mike reached for Will's sides and began relentlessly tickling him. Will collapsed onto Mike immediately shaking and grabbing for Mike's hands again. "Mike!" Will was laughing uncontrollably. "Stop Mike!"

"Make me, Will!" Mike kept at Will, enjoying the weight of his body on top of him. Suddenly Mike flipped them over, so he was lying between Will's legs. Will was too lost in his laughter to fully realize their new state. He bucked his hips a few times in an effort to escape. "What's wrong Will?" Mike mocked. "You were all powerful a minute ago!"

"Mike! Please stop Mike!" Will continued to thrash around laughing his ass off until suddenly Mike stilled. Will's laughter slowed until he was quiet as he realized why Mike had stopped. Mike was frozen between Will's legs a look of shock plastered on his face. There was no mistaking how hard he was. Will stared up into Mike's eyes. "Mike," Will whispered. Before he could say anything else Mike crashed his lips against his. Will was shocked for a moment before reciprocating the kiss. Will pushed his lips back against Mike's and let his hands wander into his hair gripping the curls. Mike growled in response as he ran his tongue along Will's bottom lip, beckoning him to open his mouth. Will did just that allowing Mike to deepen the kiss. Deep down, Will knew he had to stop this. He knew that Mike was drunk, and it shouldn't be happening like this. Pushed Mike away for a moment "Mike, we have to stop." Mike's face contorted into a look that was half frustrated and half hurt.

"Why?" Mike asked between heavy breaths.

"You're drunk, you're not thinking straight." Will tried to remain calm and collected. Mike adjusted his position, accidentally grinding himself down into Will's equally hard erection eliciting a gasp in response from Will.

"It seems like you're enjoying this as much as me." Mike added grinding himself into Will once again, this time intentionally.

"Oh god, Mike!" Will Whined. Mike was entranced by the sounds Will was making and the way he closed his eyes tightly and threw his head back.

"God, you're fucking gorgeous, Will." Mike leaned down to Kiss Will once again as he continued grinding their hips together. Mike ran his hands under Will's shirt, moaning at the touch of bare skin. All of the frustration he'd been feeling about Will was coming out in this drunken moment. Mike was relentlessly kissing and touching Will everywhere. Just as he was getting ready to reach for Will's pants they heard rustling in the trees near them. They both froze and looked over to see a group of teens making their way out of the woods. Mike and Will quickly stood and grabbed their things.

"Come on, Mike, my house is less than a mile from here." Will laced his fingers with Mike's.

"Yeah, let's go."

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

Well, I hope it was worth the wait! Let me know what you guys thought!